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ABSTRACT

Librarians may most effectively promote library legislation needed to further the goals of libraries and library service through legislative lobbying activities. The legal basis for library legislation exists in the undisputed fact that libraries are agencies of learning and therefore merit the same legislative attention as schools. The most basic form of legislation provides for national libraries and library services. Legislation also establishes planning and policy making commissions, and provides financial support for facilities, materials, and professional training. Professional associations of librarians are ideally situated to promote legislative lobbying activities. In the United States, the American Library Association and the Association of American Library Schools have insured representation of library interests at the White House Conference on Library and Information Services. Legislative lobbying by professional associations in West Germany has resulted in the enactment of model library laws. Effective lobbying efforts have been reported by associations in the Philippines, Yugoslavia, Nigeria and Latin America, while direct cooperation with governmental commissions in Senegal and the Netherlands has also produced favorable actions. On the international level, a primary goal of the International Federation of Library Associations should be assistance to national associations in pursuing legislative objectives. (RAA)

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National Library Associations and Their Impact on Library Legislation: an International Survey

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National Library Associations and Their Impact On

Library Legislation: An International Survey

It is generally acknowledged that associations created by librarians, archivists and information scientists have the primary duty to work for the common good of the society in which they exist.

In addition, such associations also have two other objectives. The first of these is to advance the particular type of institution or subject with which the association is affiliated, and the second objective is to promote the economic and professional status of the personnel who are in library and library related careers. The realization of these objectives take many forms of activity, depending upon the association's resources and the response of its members, and their willingness to work toward stated goals.

In a symposium called the Organization of the Library Profession, based on the contributions to the 1971 IFLA General Council, Mr. A.H. Chaplin defined the nine chief forms of activity by which national and international associations serve the objectives for which they were created.

The sixth of these nine activities defined by Mr. Chaplin is "representations and advice to governments on legislation and other government action for the promotion of library services."

This activity, to promote and achieve national legislation, should perhaps be one of the most predominant goals of library associations, for it is in the enactment of national laws that associations may fulfill their primary aim of working for the common good of their fellow citizens and at

the same time achieve those objectives for which the association was established.

The purpose of this paper is to review briefly the types of library legislation now existing in various countries of the world and to evaluate the impact that national associations have made in achieving such legislation.

When we speak of library and library related legislation we have in mind those laws enacted by legislative bodies at the national level or laws brought into existence through executive decrees issued by ruling authorities.

Before proceeding with a review of the types of legislation now in existence, let us think for a moment on the necessity of establishing a legal basis for such legislation. Why should a nation commit itself to laws and the expenditure of national funds on behalf of libraries and related activities? The legal basis for such legislation lies perhaps in the indisputed fact that libraries are agencies of learning for a community, a region and for a nation. The educational influence of libraries has been recognized among civilized nations for centuries. Because of this fact, libraries and information centers merit the same kind of attention that legislatures give to the establishment and maintenance of schools. The librarian and the archivist also deserve the same recognition that the school teacher and the professor has within the community.

The most basic form of legislation enacted is that by which national libraries and library services are created for the service of the individual nation.

Added to this are other forms of legislation by which government ministries are created for the administration of libraries and library

services, library boards are instituted to provide planning and policy decisions, national funds are allocated for the creation of public and school libraries, and library schools are established to train professional personnel and advance the knowledge of librarianship.

Other related forms of legislation deal with the organization of communication networks, the regulation of the book industry, copyright laws, the censorship of books and the production and sale of pornography.

What role have the national library and archival associations played in achieving such legislation within their countries?

Most of the information available to answer this question goes back to a survey made of national and international associations in 1975 and published in 1976 under the title of International Guide to Library, Archival and Information Science Associations by the R.R.Bowker Company of New York (Fang and Songe, 1976). At present, a 1979 survey is being conducted, but has not been completed in time for the results to be made available for this paper.

In the questionnaire sent out in the 1975 survey, the associations were asked, if they participated in bringing about library legislation in their countries, and in what form of action this activity was realized.

It was found that 50 national associations out of 317 contacted reported concerted efforts for national legislation. These 50 associations represented 31 countries. We must also add here the fact that many associations contacted were established after library legislation had been enacted in their countries and thus they did not claim any participation in this respect. However we look to them for future action when additional legislation will be needed.

The concerted efforts of the 50 associations reporting fall into several forms of action, principally that of lobbying. This was done in

groups by committees, and by working with other organizations also interested in achieving library legislation.

In the organization of lobbying efforts the American Library Association might be considered as a model for other associations planning the same type of action.

In May 1973 the Legislative Committee of the American Library Association (ALA) issued a brochure called The National Legislative Network for Libraries: A Master Plan. The Legislative Committee calls the plan "a synthesis of most successful practices which can be identified nationwide." The purpose of the "master plan" is to organize libraries and library organizations within the 50 American states to coordinate efforts to achieve library legislation. The techniques for this approach were realized by first sending out a questionnaire to the president of every state and school library association. From the results of the questionnaire a profile of legislative operations in existence could be identified, improved upon and fashioned into a working plan of action.

Other means by which national associations can bring the full impact of lobbying for library legislation is also suggested by the Director of the ALA's Washington office, Miss Eileen Cooke. In an article appearing in Library Trends for July 1975, Miss Cooke describes the 30-year efforts of that organization in influencing the United States Congress to enact laws for public, school and academic libraries. (Cooke, 1975).

Some of the salient points expressed by Miss Cooke may be of value to association members who are planning lobbying efforts, so we will consider a few of them here.

The first point emphasized is that librarians, compared to other groups seeking to influence legislators are fewer in number, but are widely located,

thus having representation in various parts of the country. Because they are fewer in number, librarians must seek allies, other organizations who are equally desirous of achieving library legislation. The combined efforts of several groups make a more formidable presentation when approaching legislatures.

Then there is the professional knowledge and expertise of librarians that is of the utmost importance. Librarians are more adept, as a rule, than most citizens at collecting, organizing and presenting facts - a vital skill in the legislative process.

Another strength to be considered for organizations is the fact that associations are permanent and corporate bodies. While individual persons may come and go, organizations remain and legislators are aware of this fact. Miss Cooke also adds that "The validity and credibility of a viewpoint is enhanced when it is espoused by an organization, especially if the organization's members are particularly qualified by training and experience to express the viewpoint and defend it in debate and discussion."

Besides the American Library Association, the Association of American Library Schools (AALS) has been active in promoting the extension of library legislation in the field of library and information science training by having members testify for the so-called Title II-B legislation. It has also been effective in assuring representation of library education at the forthcoming White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCOLIS) in October 1979. Other national, regional and state library associations are likewise employed in working for the success of this important national conference, which should result in far-reaching decisions concerning the future of library and information services in the United States.

Another important factor in the achievement of library legislation lies in the managerial and constitutional structure of the association itself. Does the structure of the association lend itself to organized efforts for political activity? This fact is clearly brought out by John E. Pemberton in describing the political role of the century-old Library Association of the United Kingdon (Pemberton, 1977). Mr. Pemberton writes: "For over 80 years after the creation of the Association in 187[illegible] the story was one of political frustration for librarians seeking to secure the reform of the public library service in England and Wales; whereas shortly after its internal reorganization and the awakening in its counsels and membership of a political consciousness, under the influence of the new Secretary [Mr. H.D.Barry] the chimera of reforming legislation was transformed into a reality." The Library Association became more dynamic and with the joint efforts of many people contributed to the successful passage of the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 (Paton, 1977).

An example of effectiveness of library associations on legislation can be seen in the Federal Republic of Germany, where due to the administrative complexity, each of the eight states and three city-states have to pass their own laws. On December 16, 1975, the legislature of the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg passed the first such law concerning the development of public libraries, thus serving as a model for other states to follow suit. Though this law has been criticized as not being concrete enough, it is regarded an important beginning, since for the first time libraries were legally recognized as an integral and equal part of educational facilities. Both the Verein Deutscher Bibliothekare (German Library Association) and Verein der Diplom-Bibliothekare an Wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken (Association of Certified Librarians at Research Libraries) are involved in publishing

library legislation. (Lansky, 1970+).

In other parts of the world there was also notable lobbying efforts for legislation, as reported by various associations in the 1975 survey. Within the time allowed for this paper we can only present some of the highlights of what the national associations have accomplished.

In the Philippines, the Association of Special Libraries reported joint efforts with the Philippine Library Association for legislation concerning the professional certification of librarians.

In Yugoslavia, the Union of Library Workers of Serbia reported that they participated in the activities of trade unions and political organizations to further the cause of librarianship (see also Mudri-Skunca, 1973).

In Nigeria, both national library associations were active to obtain federal legislation. The members of the Imo States School Libraries Association drew up acceptable standards for school libraries and presented them to the government for possible adoption. The Nigerian Library Association worked for the establishment of library boards within their country.

Latin American associations also reported concerted efforts for federal legislation. This was true of organizations in Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Barbados and Puerto Rico. It was interesting to note that in addition to working for the National Librarians School Status and Studies Program, commissions of the Association of Peruvian Librarians also concentrated their efforts on laws and regulations for national information networks.

Activities other than lobbying were also reported by associations. In Senegal, the members of the National Association of Librarians, Archivists, and Documentalists worked with a special government commission to adopt and implement legislation for libraries and the library profession. Likewise in Spain members of the National Association of Librarians, Archivists and

Archeologists serve as consultants for library affairs in the Ministry of Education and Science. Members of the Danish Library Association have representation in their government. The association is represented in all Federal law committees for the Danish government.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch Center for Public Libraries and Literature (Nederlands Bibliotheek en Lektuur Centrum/NBLC) with its 2,000 individual and over 600 institutional members and its effective journal Bibliotheek en samenleving (Library and Society) can take credit to a large extent that the Library Act, submitted in September 1972, was finally enacted on July 1, 1975. The Library Act provides increased financial subsidies by the government and sets high standards for public libraries (Wijnstroom, 1975). The success of the Dutch librarians in the passing of the Library Act, which will provide the basis for national library development, has set an example for librarians in other countries to continue their efforts toward effective library legislation.

Finally, in my closing remarks, I should like to make some recommendations as to the role that IFLA might assume in assisting national associations in their efforts to achieve national library legislation. After considering the reports that the national associations submitted in the 1975 survey, my co-author Alice Songe and I both concluded that an organized advisory group in IFLA might be of service to associations in their concerted efforts for legislation.

The new Constitution of IFLA provides for a widening of IFLA's professional scope. Its newly defined purpose is to "promote international understanding, cooperation, discussion, research and development in all fields of library activity." (Wijnstroom, 1976)

Might not the research and development in all fields of library activity also include that of assisting national associations in pursuing library legislation?

Each country is unique in the structure of its society, its laws and its institutions, but could not IFLA, from its professional membership provide the expertise in advising associations on organizational methods best suited to their own national needs? Such an advisory group might be incorporated as an activity of an IFLA Section already in existence. Offering such consultative services would certainly increase the effectiveness of IFLA as an international force in librarianship throughout the world.

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